

EXCLUSIVE: Ted Cruz Recounts the Night He Met Jesus

Ted Cruz isn't like other preachers' kids. His dad wasn't actually a pastor when he was growing up—and he wasn't always a godly man either.

In this exclusive interview, Cruz tells the story of how his father got saved and the spiritual ripple effect it caused in his family and in his life.

You can listen to the podcast of this interview [here](#).

You can still read parts one and two of this series: “The Real Reason Ted Cruz Wants to Be President” and “Is Ted Cruz a Reagan 2.0?”

Charisma: Our magazine is spiritual, not political, so we want to talk about spiritual things. How did having a pastor as a father shape your worldview?

Cruz: PKs (preachers' kids) have an interesting journey that ties us all together. My father didn't become a pastor until later in life, so when I was a child, he was in business. He was very involved in church, but he didn't become a full-time pastor until I was an adult, so I didn't have the experiences of many PKs, of every Sunday getting ready for the Sunday sermon.

That was not my experience of growing up, but I grew up in the church and faith was and is integral to our family. I've shared a number of times my personal testimony, and for me, it really began as a family journey. It didn't start with me. As I shared last night, when I was 3, my parents and I were living up in Calgary, and neither of my parents were believers. Both of them drank far too much and my father decided to leave us, so he left my mother and me and went back

to Texas, went back to Houston, and he decided he didn't have time to be a father anymore, and he didn't want to be a husband; he wanted to be on his own.

He was gone for a number of months, and when he was down in Houston, a colleague of his from the oil and gas business invited him to a Bible study, and he went. He was described as being amazed and very puzzled by the peace that everyone had at that Bible study. Everyone was facing challenges, nobody's life was easy.

One woman he remembers to this day was a woman who described how her son would beat her to get money to buy drugs and yet she still had this peace. One Scripture describes it as the "peace that passes understanding." He couldn't understand it. It made no sense to him. How could she have that peace with such a terrible home life?

He began asking questions, asking more and more questions, and the couple whose home the Bible study was being held in said: "Well, our pastor is coming tomorrow night. Why don't you come back and ask him?" He said, "OK." So he came back the next night and he spent four or five hours arguing with the pastor.

My father was a young man and he was very, very bright. He was a scientist, he was an atheist, and he was convinced he knew everything. He was convinced that religion couldn't possibly be true and so he argued with the pastor until about 11:00 at night and then he asked, he said, "Well, what about the man in Tibet who's never heard of Jesus?"

And then the pastor—his name was Gaylon Wylie—he was the pastor of Clay Road Baptist Church, which was a small church in Houston. Then Brother Wylie very wisely didn't take that bait or he would have been there another four or five hours. Instead, he said, "Raphael, I don't know about the man in Tibet, but you've heard of Jesus. What's your excuse?" And then my dad described how that just hit him like a ton of

bricks and he dropped to his knees and he gave his life to Jesus, and it turned my father around.

The next Sunday he went to Clay Road Baptist Church and was baptized and he drove to the airport and bought a ticket and flew back to Calgary and rejoined my mother and me. And so a lot of people wonder whether faith is real, and I can say in my family that if it was not for the transformative love of Christ, I would have been raised by a single mom without my dad in the house.

Shortly thereafter, the three of us moved down to Houston, and that next year, my mother was saved as well. So as a child, I grew up in the church and then, when I was 8, I went to a church summer camp at Clay Road along with my cousin, Bebe, who was five years older than I am. She was like a sister to me, and both of us became Christians at that summer camp. I was baptized that summer, and it transformed our lives.

I describe one of the amazing things about the campaign is that you drive all around the country, you visit with people all over the place and we had a big rally in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. A couple thousand people came out, and unbeknownst to me, Gaylon Wylie had retired to Tennessee and was living there, and he came to the rally.

I found out just a few minutes before the rally started, someone told me he was going to be there. I asked him to come forward, and I hadn't seen him in 35 years. The last time I had seen him, I was probably 10 years old, and it was an amazing and powerful moment simply to embrace it and say thank you for sharing the gospel on that night, April 15, 1975, in Houston, Texas.

It transformed not only my father's life, but my mother's life and my life and the life of my wife, Heidi, and our children in terms of the ripples of the pond of the generations that are impacted by sharing the Good News.